DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY P Schmelzer DATE 7/2/85
DDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
(3)(AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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How Each Plane Chosen: Chronologies

Q: Trace the process by which each sale was chosen for a proposed letter of offer. In each case, why is the particular plane selected uniquely adapted to the perceived needs of the country involved?

A: A classified chronology for each sale is attached.

Each country has a legitimate need to maintain a credible defense capability, and in each case the requirement for air defense relates to the area or installations to be protected, the peculiarities of terrain, varying degrees of manpower and technical constraints, and the postulated threat. The Israeli requirement for F-15s and F-16s derives in large part from their need to maintain the kind of qualitative edge that compensates for demographic constraints. They do not have the manpower to expand their forces significantly. The mix of F-15s and F-16s is analogous to the U.S. concept of hi-low mix in which both the costs and the capabilities of aircraft are considered when structuring for an optimum force mix.

The F-5s offered to Egypt are less sophisticated than the advanced aircraft sought by Israel and Saudi Arabia. The F-5 is well suited to the air defense role for which Egypt intends it. The F-15 for Saudi Arabia is the only aircraft in the U.S. inventory that meets the Saudi requirement for a single-seat, twin-engine, all-weather air superiority fighter. A full description of the unique Saudi requirements and how they relate to the Saudi choice

of the F-15 is contained in the classified DOD analysis of the Saudi F-15 request which was forwarded to Chairman Zablocki on March 8.

Chronology

SAUDI ARABIA - (F-15)

1966	The Saudis purchase the British Lightning, an excellent interceptor in its day.
May 1973	Before the October war, the Saudis begin talking about the need for a more modern interceptor in anticipation of the Lightning's usefulness ending around 1980. U.S. agrees in principle to provide F-4s.
April - June 1974	The Saudis state they are no longer interested in the F-4 because it is an obsolescent aircraft and not adequate for their needs. A DOD study of Saudi defense needs recommends that the Saudis acquire a modern follow-on interceptor capability in the 1980s.
November 1974	Assistant Secretary of Defense Ellsworth conveys the USG's willingness to be responsive to a Saudi request to purchase an advanced fighter. The Saudis express interest in sixty aircraft.
April and September 1975	Deputy Secretary Clements and Secretary Kissinger reaffirm US willingness to provide an advanced fighter.
October 1975	A DOD team briefs the RSAF and the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA) on the F-14, F-15, F-16, and F-18. The Saudis reject the F-18 as not available soon enough for Saudi needs.
March - April 1976	A Saudi team, including Lightning pilots, visits the U.S. for a "hands on" inspection of the aircraft, including orientation flights in the F-14 and F-15 (no twin-seat F-16 was available).
October 1976	Deputy Secretary Clements confirms that the U.S. would agree to supply the advanced aircraft the Saudis wanted to purchase.
February 1977	The Saudis formally request the F-15.

May 1977	During a visit by Crown Prince Fahd, the Administration affirms its willingness to seek the agreement of Congress on providing Saudi Arabia the advanced aircraft of its choice. The Saudis then reconfirm that the F-15 is their choice.
January 1978	Arms Export Control Board reviews the Middle East aircraft package.
January 1978	During President Carter's visit to Riyadh, Saudi officials stress the need for prompt action on the F-15.
January 1978	The Policy Review Committee of the National Security Council reviews the Middle East aircraft package.
February 1978	Secretary Vance announces the President's decision on the aircraft package.

Chronology

EGYPT (F-5E)

August 1975	Sadat tells visiting Congressional delegation he is interested in the F-5E.
Feb.-1976	Egyptian Minister of War approves publication of an article indicating Egyptian interest in the F-5.
Feb.-1977	Egyptian Minister of War informally gives to the U.S. Defense Attache a list of defense items which Egypt might be interested in buying from the U.S., including 120 F-5Es.
Feb.-1977	During Secretary Vance's first visit to Cairo, President Sadat informally discusses with him a number of items of military equipment -- including 120 F-5Es. No formal request.
March-1977	Sadat states on U.S. television he wants the F-5.
Apr.-1977	During Sadat's visit to Washington, aircraft are discussed in a general way. Sadat leaves with Secretary Brown a list of items in which Egypt had an interest, including F-5Es.
Nov.-1977	Sadat visits Jerusalem and renounces war against Israel.
Dec.-1977	During the Secretary's December visit to Cairo, Sadat discusses the subject of continuing Egyptian interest in F-5Es.
Jan.-1978	AECB reviews the Middle East aircraft package.
Jan.-1978	Sadat publicly calls for the U.S. to provide Egypt with the same sophisticated military equipment that the U.S. is providing Israel.
Jan.-1978	Policy Review Committee of National Security Council reviews Middle East Aircraft Package.

Feb.-1978	During visit to Washington, Sadat discusses interest in F-5 and other U.S. aircraft. Sadat states publicly: "I need these arms not to attack Israel, for I have chosen my fate for peace and I shall not change my ideas."
Feb.-1978	Secretary Vance announces President's decision on aircraft package.

SECRET

Chronology

ISRAEL (F-15/F-16)

July 1974	Israel submits MATMON B: "Defense Requirements of the IDF for the Next Ten Years: 1974-83." Plan projected the acquisition of 50 F-14/15 aircraft and 250 YF-16/17 aircraft.
Sept.-1975	Sinai II Memorandum of Agreement states U.S. "will view Israel's requests sympathetically, including its request for advanced and sophisticated weapons."
Sept.-1975	In context of Sinai II, President Ford assures Prime Minister Rabin it is his "resolve to continue to maintain Israel's defensive strength through the supply of advanced types of equipment, such as the F-16 aircraft."
Sept.-1975	Israeli Ambassador letter to Secretary Kissinger makes explicit request for 25 F-15s and 250 F-16s, including coproduction of the latter.
Nov.-1975	Interagency review of Israel's request.
Jan.-1976	President Ford approves sale of 25 F-15 aircraft. F-16 approved in principle with numbers and delivery dates to be considered at a later date.
Dec.-1976	Israel submits request for 250 F-16s plus two pre-production aircraft; 200 to be co-produced and 52 to be purchased.
Jan-1977	President Carter reaffirms President Ford's approval in principle of F-16. Israel informed.

SECRET

Oct. -1977	Israel formally submits: MATMON C: "Defense Requirements: 1978-1986." 25 additional F-15s and 150 F-16s requested; 90 of the F-16s to be delivered by April 1983.
Jan.-1978	AECB reviews Middle East aircraft package
Jan. -1978	Policy Review Committee of National Security Council reviews Middle East Aircraft Package.
Feb. -1978	Secretary Vance announced President's decision on aircraft package.